

MEASURE

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Take Me As I Am

Listen to me when I say to you,

Take me as I am.

Take my hand when I reach out to you,

Take me as I am.

When I try so hard to please you,

Take me as I am.

When I take you in my arms to hold you,

Take me as I am.

When the world is falling down around me,

Take me as I am.

When I cry out for someone to hold me,

Take me as I am.

When others words get through to me,

You only try to tell me,

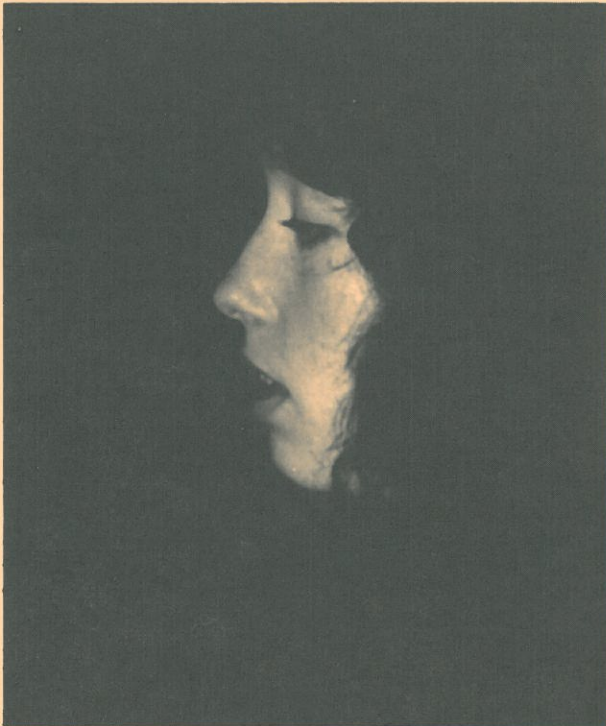
You take me as I am.

Cindy Mucha

As I Gaze

The moon rose and spun.
The stars danced.
Their rays of light
Flooded through the window.
They rested upon his head.
Tousled hair spun of gold.
Lips curved in a dreamy smile.
Bed sheets rumped.
A ragged teddy bear rests
In his embrace.
I am filled with love
As I gaze upon my sleeping
Son.

Monica Broom



Want

Once in a while I need you;
To lend me a shoulder to cry on;
A hand to hold;
A confidante.

I need you, but you aren't there;
Not there to talk to me;
To hold me;
To get me through the night.

What hurts the most?
The fact that I was there for you;
And you used me;
And now, I can't let you go.

I want you to need me;
To want me as I want you;
To be with me, my friend;
Just love me.

Cindy Mucha

*A Girl,
By Surprise*

A girl, by surprise
only in my dreams
had I met
on the lips took me
and me gently kissed —

As a shiver
these simple words
my body overtook
she spoke —

"I may be a dream
to some
but
I am a reality
to the most important"

Michael Sheehan

Your Eyes

When

I look into your eyes,
I feel
The softness of a cloud,
The roughness of the sea.
I feel
The deepness of the love —
The love you feel for me.

I just look into your eyes.

Sheryl L.

*Grace Born
to Him*

A large fluff of fur,
Stalking in the grass,
Suddenly stopping,
Tail twitching,
Ears fallen back,
Eyes watching,
Leaps into the air,
With grace born to him.
In the mouth a dead leaf,
On the face a grin.

Cindy Mucha

And you, Tom Eliot
(After Reading T. S. Eliot: A Life
by Peter Ackroyd)

And you, Tom Eliot, who have cast your spell
and made your mark on us who do not write so well,
you can't release us from your fear.
You prayed and sipped your wine.
We read your books and poems
and drank our beer.
But now we know.
Your life's an open book,
and though your poems remain aloof —
the impersonal was what you preached —
we know of your troubled marriage bed,
your horror of menses and dread of colds and flu,
the healing baths, the madness, and the solitude.
You thought your hell was absolute and cosmic,
but it was only you.
And by routine in counting money or in making books
you gained a sense of order,
became a spokesman for your age and ours.
And now we know.
Tradition, state, and church were never facts,
but desperate hopes for one who felt
yet loathed his body and himself.
We thought you were our guide,
but we were wrong.

John D. Groppe

I Cry For My Love

I cry for my love; I sulk and I pout.
I am a believer; there's none more devout.
I know my Creator; I love all his ways.
I give him repentance all of my days.

I can feel his anguish; my heart is on fire.
He is my true lover; He is my desire.
I feel His protection; I sense He is here.
I pray for redemption each time He comes near.

I was made from this God; He has made me whole.
He's the giver of my life and the taker of my soul.
So, when I pray to Him, I look toward the sky above.
I feel Him down in my heart and I cry out for my love.

Michael Sheehan

Down

This piece is taken from a novel in progress. In the story Phil Deaver uses the term "strange," as in "bringing home strange," to refer to picking up a stranger in a bar and bringing him home.

When you're down, there's no telling what you'll do. You might run away. You might sleep under a railroad tressle two nights, spend the third night in jail. You might stay in bed the whole day, Saturday, crying, the verticals pulled to point light away. You might take the kids for drive, maybe to the beach, but not really hear what they're saying as you drive along. You might try to hide it from them that you're down, but you might not be able to. Or you might disguise sadness with anger, grouse at them for not fastening in, not washing their hands before leaving the house, something like that. You might complain that they aren't in gifted like your friends' kids at Sabal Point Elementary.

Or, when you're down, you might stay home, going through the motions, ironing and vacuuming around the grim, hand-me-down furniture, down the dim tract-house hall leading to the bedroom, nowhere.

If Margie your neighbor calls to ask how you are, you might pick up the phone and then cut her off, leave it off the hook where it should have been, if only you'd been thinking tactically, if only you hadn't been so down. You know that soon she'll be at the door, knocking, looking in the front window, trying to see through the sheer curtains — you might watch her form bending and moving at the window. She has a casserole she wants to give you — "Open up. You have to EAT!," she might say from the porch. And you might think a lot about your wasted life — people do that when they're down. They think about the missed opportunities. They think about the people they knew once who, if things had been different, might have made them happy. The memories and regrets, they form a high, gray wall right before you. They become your partners when you're down, the fixations that keep you down.

Your ex — may call, but you won't talk to him either.

You might think of the strange you brought home from Isaac's on your few carousing romps, the dimness of those moments, passion wrestled away from a life for the most part absent passion. You might think of the shocking amount you forgot and the narrow horror or maybe it was regret in the scenes you remember, drunken haze, tunnel vision. You might remember other places, strange beds, a hotel — the shadows and light from a half-opened bathroom door. Maybe you remember a voice and think you hear it, present time, coming from a corner of the room. What drives you? What drives you down?

There are some great drugs for this. They extend the bounds of down, by making you feel pretty good even though all things around you are turning to shambles and shit — you're down but for a while don't feel it and so to FEEL down, like you want and need to, you have to go further down yet, get beneath the therapy. And you always can. Down is bottomless. Just when you think you've bottomed, you break through a thin crust that appeared to be the bottom, and downward, a whole world opens up, new heights of down, no end in sight. It gets darker, the air thinner. It gets damp — you are far inside yourself, the surface numb. You pray before the monolith, you are down further than you've ever been before, an athlete, an explorer, a pioneer. You are amazed at the depth of down, amazed at the body's ability to have this depth and handle it, amazed to realize that by letting air out and then ceasing for a moment to breathe you could inch even further down. And then by pushing you could come against your very core, fall through it (it's merely a membrane, human tissue) into outer space, tumbling, tumbling, down.

You've been crying in your sleep, the curtains pulled, and it's late afternoon. You have vodka on ice and a headache, echoes of voices in your head, the battery clock a room away ticking, the phone periodically beeping in a rhythm to tell you that you've left it off the hook. You think a car was in the driveway, you think someone knocked at the window. Margie. Go away. You're so down you even hope someone has come, you even hope it. Go away.

"What do you want from me?" — the question lingers from some other time, and you recall your sad impression, immediate, that you didn't know, that he wasn't really a stranger and why didn't he KNOW what you want. Outside the sun is going down. The sheets of this bed have rubbed your skin sore, smell of the tears. You hear the kids playing in the yard, unaware that dinner is missed. The kids.

At the door, Margie will yell in. "Who's here? Are you all right? You got strange in there again? These aren't the times," she'll call. "These aren't the times for that. You're taking a terrible chance. I've got this food —" She holds the casserole up at the window.

"What do you believe in?" the shrink will say when you build the strength to take his time on the phone, Monday maybe, or Tuesday, exasperating question, the wrong thing to ask a person who's down. Because being down IS a question, the acting out of a basic, immovable interrogative that insists itself — you can't step past it forever, and now the heavy, sad, ponderous weight of it pushes you down, and down you go. The shrink will arrange time for you at Westlake, where you can get state-of-the-art shock therapy and still make it home in time for "All My Children." The shock therapy is intended to get your mind off yourself. You run with double exposures for twenty-four hours, the soreness in your limbs partially hidden by Tylenol Three.

"I believe in love," you'll have wanted to say. Maybe you'll try to call and tell him that, if you can find his number. It'll hit you days later that this is what you should have offered up to him, that it should have been spontaneous because it was obvious. So maybe it wasn't so obvious, so maybe it's a lie — one of those lies that sounds good and how can someone argue with you when you tell them you believe in love.

"I believe in love," you say aloud. In a boozy dream you're parked at night on a slanting parking lot that tips down toward the bay, and your headlights are on a tan mausoleum kind of building with "Saint Simon's" on the wall in blue mosaic. A car, Mercedes maybe, diesel, you can hear it, has pulled up behind you, the lights brilliant in the mirror. You're

afraid to turn around. The interior of your car is awash in light from the car behind you. Now someone is standing next to you, just out of your sight as you stare ahead — he says, "Close your eyes," and you do. He leans down so you can feel his breath as he speaks to you through the open window. "Go away," he says. "I never want your eyes on me. You're a fake."

"Love alone? Is that all you want?" the priest will ask, "or you want for yourself the love of someone other than you? Or do you want to love someone other than yourself?"

"It's all different," he'll say. "It's all different."

He'll quote Merton to you, tell you to get off yourself. Visit the poor or the sick. Visit jails. Get off yourself. By this time you'll be so down your neighbors will be offering to buy your piano and your books to relieve the pressure. Old friends provide advice but don't offer to stay with the kids so you can take a healthful rest — you're in the living room, on the floor, and "Wheel of Fortune" provides a man named Ed a vintage car for naming a cliché, and you know you won't know trash from substance if it speaks to you in the hallway, and anyway it won't, it won't speak to you, it won't even whisper, and if it did you wouldn't listen because you're down.

"Wake up," Margie will tell you on the phone. "Are you okay? The line's been busy for a month, I swear."

You know a girl — she's grown up now but she still cries sometimes — who found her mom hanging from the backdoor one night when she came home from cheerleading practice, and you remember a guy at Isaac's one night who shook, sitting at the bar, as he yelled to you over the music a story about his father's failed attempt — his father put a pistol in his mouth and blew out the joint of his jawbone and some flesh under the ear, several teeth and most of his tongue from the explosion, but didn't die. Instead, a terrible sight, he stumbled into the living room where his wife and kids were finishing dinner. Years later he succeeded, but the kids always remember the day he didn't.

"I'm okay, Margie" you'll tell her. "Thanks for asking."

To escape, you whip through novels like glasses of water. Mysteries, the truth unfolding slowly but at least unfolding. You daydream, maybe, mindtravel as when you peer through a telescope up the North Shore toward Waukegan, from an apartment you had when you were single twenty years ago, watch the people, gray in the distance, walking in couples or alone, homage to the water. The lake is steel gray, the room you own is gray, too, the clock in the other room is ticking, present time . . .

The kids are in the yard, and seem like they've grown. And the trees seem like they've grown, too. One knock and you're at the door.

"Did you bring back the car?" you may ask.

"Yes, but not just that. I want to talk to you." The door starts to close.

"Now wait. I want to talk to you."

"You're dead," you say to me, and I believe it. I feel like a ghost. Margie's curtains next door move subtly at the window toward our house.

"No. I'm back and I'm sorry. I want to talk a few minutes."

"You can't keep this illusion up very long, that you're sorry, if you're dead."

You stare at me.

"You're dead," you say. "This illusion that you're made of good intentions, only overwhelmed. That your eyes are the gateways to your soul, and all that. That you're back and you're sorry you died . . ." You look at my feet when you talk. I'm a shade visiting from the other side. "All that illusion, it's generated by motion and metabolism, when you're alive," you say.

"I'm back. I truly am," I might try to say.

But quickly your eyes are in mine. "You can keep up the illusions when you're alive," you say to me. "But when you're dead, you're history."

You close the door very gently, and I hear your steps on the wood floor as you retreat to the middle of the house.

Philip F. Deaver

Woman of All Seasons

It is no wonder that I cannot understand her.
Nature changes all the time without consoling me.
And from her change I too must change —
 only to please myself.
Her first move is to pinpoint a passer
And the rest comes quite routinely.
The first come introduction clearly states her position.
Those colors she shows off
 say she's in the springtime of her youth.
Then, turning on the heat, she will bluntly tell
The mission she is trying to achieve —
 a line all would know is couth.
But, soon she tires and desires another one,
And in her nature I find a new unkindly frost.
She throws a cold shoulder in my direction
Or an arctic eye that tells me all is lost.

Michael Sheehan

A rolling grassy green
Over hillock and grassy knoll
Listen to the clomping cloping
A white horse leaps over a log
Upon the horse's back a woman
A fairie beauty with curls of brown
Her fair skin pale against the forest
Running running through the forest
Is a white horse
Listen to the clomping cloping
Over hillock and grassy knoll
A rolling grassy green

Anonymous

Long Distance Birthday

A bunch of balloons
a dozen roses
Delivered to your door,
Birthday cards, packages,
A mere phone call at night
— Such little gestures.

Sheryl L.

Popcorn

I'm a popcorn lover,
I admit it's true,
I hate to think
Of all the bowls I've been through.

No matter the flavor,
No matter the name,
Once I get started,
The ending's the same.

The taste of the salt,
The smell of the butter,
Will make me go crazy,
Will make my heart flutter.

I love every morsel,
Each snowy-white puff,
Just can't get enough of the stuff.
I savor each mouthful,
Each musical crunch,
I have it for dinner, breakfast and lunch.

Each bit I devour,
From the very first pop,
'Cause once I start eating,
It seems I can't stop.
Inch after inch I add to my fanny,
I've gotten so desperate I sold my own Granny.

Amy Ceader

I am another person and this other stranger is me.
We live our lives fully, though, intermittently.
We are one mind thinking, we are spirit — one soul.
We are one body, one strength; we are whole.
We defy each other oftenly and argue all the time,
But I am more the powerful, I am more sublime.
He feels he doesn't need me; his lust is far above me.
Although I am more healthy, his looks are what I envy.
I see him in the darkened glass and through the windowpane.
I am the more intelligent, he is the more insane.
He follows my every action, but changes all the while.
His dress is inappropriate, but my dress is in style.
He worships no Heavenly angel or single spirit around.
His hedonistic value is what he has sought and found.
He repeats every word I say, but in a sense of utter stupidity,
He hates this body which I encase him and truly wants to kill me.
If he did he would regret it since I am what he is.
He would spend his next life dimly in the darkest world of Dis.

Michael Sheehan

I woke this morning with headache
and gazed sleepily outside the dormroom window.

The strips of toilet paper caught in the trees
gently waved.

Empty bottles waited half-hidden from sun's
rays in a green sea.

Here in the dorm, silence filled the halls.

I turned my head and noticed a picture
on the wall in crayon, and one in marker.

My stereo's inside mess of wires was now
hanging over the turntable, and a colorful pool
of sickness was on the floor.

My covers reeked of sour mix and I felt
somewhat queezy.

I believed myself half dressed, and a red
dress and lingerie lay scattered across the sheets
on the bed where my roommate should have been sleeping.

Michael Sheehan

Sound of a Ring

Had I been given softer pap to chew
And led to cut my teeth on rubber bones,
These vain attempts at verse might ring more true
In words that charm the ear with tender tones.
Although my heart can feel a soul's caress,
Its words rub gratingly upon the ear;
When prompted to extend some tenderness
I manage to evoke a bitter tear.
But rough has been my food of early youth,
And harsh the roughened teething ring of life
On which I bit the existential truth
That forged hard steel into not pen, but knife.
Please help this leaden tongue of mine to sound
A lighter ring that leaves my thoughts unbound.

— T.H.



A threat of war or a whisper of peace?
When the first shot is fired, then's the time it should cease.
As the children all watch as the Chief gives his call,
One nation will rise while another will fall.
The mother's will cry as their sons go away;
The gravestones will speak of the courage they paid.
The silence will frighten the remaining few.
Rain's puddles resemble the blood that was due.

Michael Sheehan

Outside, Inside

Outside my soul:

Gossip flies upon the air,
Nations shudder with discontent,
Weapons are birthed from evil.

Inside my soul:

Love restrained from bursting,
Eyes peer into the future,
Fear springs as a specter.

Monica Broom

My Country

The grass is silently stirred —
Stirred by the breath of the free.
Living, working, loving here.
Their hearts are beating —
Beating to God's hymn.
A promise of land hugged with liberty.
A promise of brotherhood and sisterhood.
Eyes glimmer to the sound.
America is heard.

Monica Broom

Lazare, Veni Foras
(A Vignette)

Robert Thriber trudged disconsolately up the hill, almost unknowing of the light autumn drizzle that flecked his tweed jacket with dusky stains. Every day, he mused, every day. Then comes night, dark, empty night. Robert Thriber ascended his hill downward.

Almost to his house Thriber turned and faced the city, sprawling beneath the horizon in grotesque imitation of sparkle, of light. The truth is, he thought, that the city is only less shadowy than its inhabitants. People, dark and forbidding, dangerous and dull.

Thriber's heavy tread raised a tremor in the old wooden porch floor; his key set up raspy echoes in the empty house. He threw the damp tweed jacket toward a chair as he stepped into the dark kitchen. The one naked bulb cast his shadow upon the back door as he searched the cupboard for a can of beans. There was none.

Thriber cursed silently as he opened the cellar door and reached for the light switch. The negative response told him that either the bulb was burnt out or the fuse was blown. He groped his way toward the place of the hand rail, remembering to pay heed to the short step, the fourth one down. And then the sinking feeling, the stab of pain, the numbness, the blackness.

Father Richard Lamona walked slowly downstairs from Robert Thriber's bedroom. He looked calmly and evenly into the tear-filled eyes of Janet Etavian and spoke.

"You may go up now; Doctor Reed will allow a short visit with Robert." The words were, to Janet, a caricature, a cruel joke.

"How?" she cried. "We saw Doctor Reed pronounce him dead! How?"

The answer to her impassioned "How?" is not relevant to this account. It belongs rather to another history, that of the remarkable Father Lamona, the thaumaturge whom his parishioners had already unofficially canonized.

Robert Thriber had a sparkle in his eyes, a lightness in his voice, a song in his soul.

"Janet, help me fill the days with the joy of being alive in a beautiful world!" Thriber actually throbbed in exuberance as Thomas Reed, M.D. slowly shook his head in awe.

Every morning the newly-spawned Apostle of Optimism burst forth from his home, fairly skipping down the hill to the city. He spread joy and well-being like a latter-day Pippa. His co-workers, long grown accustomed to the surly avoidings of Robert Thriber, were reluctant to accept the Bible-quoting burst of sunshine that had replaced him.

But one person in Thriber's circle of acquaintances had taken the tone of his new-found *joie de vivre* to heart. Janet Etavian was now secretly giving resurrection to her long-buried hopes of entering the Convent of the Sisters of the Holy Sepulchre. Robert Thriber's trust in the Lord and superabundant joy in His blessings had inspired Janet to renew her talks with Mother Mary Martha.

The spring was gone from Thriber's step. The hill was difficult to ascend. The tweed jacket exuded a camphor smell as the rain hit it.

One year had gone by since the night of Father Lamona's miracle. Twelve months had come and gone upon Robert Thriber's attempts to convince his fellow man that life was worth being joyful about. Six months had passed since he first fearfully began to doubt the source of his own confidence, his rebirth. Six months ago his Janet had become a novice in the Convent of the Holy Sepulchre.

His sodden shoes sloshed upon the wooden porch.

"Have to paint this porch some day," Thriber thought. He dropped the wet jacket near a kitchen chair and stood dripping beneath the shadow-making bulb. The bulb sputtered twice and then expired in a mild blue flash.

Thriber thought as he headed for the cellar that tomorrow for sure he would repair that short step, the fourth one down.

— T.H.

Stardust Memories

What is in a name?
Stardust
the glamour and the glitter
playing on the street at night
the streetlight twinkles in the night
quietly the melody strums
coming quietly from her guitar
Lady Stardust plays in the night
the street corner her world
the song her life

Lauren Bender

To the Girl

Okay, I do love you
I Look at you in class
I watch you when you're not
You are very beautiful
Yes, I do love you
Every part of you
Is to me perfection
You can be nothing else
Who am I?
I am every man in love.
Who are you?
You are every girl.

Anonymous

Lady Stardust

Lady Stardust sings a song of darkness and despair
With her long black hair and animal grace
She plays her guitar and sits on the street
No one stops no one listens to the song
But it's all right as she sits and plays

Lady Stardust sings a song of darkness and despair
She smiles as the man walks past
Oh how she sighs when the man asks her name
The flash of silver as he pays the song
But it's all right as she sits and plays

Lauren Bender

Reflections

I see reflections
In a mirror.
Which of them
Is really
Me?
They change from
Season to season.
They change from
Time to time.
So fast.
So slow.
Sometimes it makes me
Unsure of —
Which of them
Is really
Me?

Monica Broom

Tangent

Where the wind comes from you do not know:
You wait.
Try not to, and go nowhere.
There is nothing that is not gift.

Elements of light
Ricochet off the silver crests,
Searing, blinding in brilliance.
The same wave that carries
Might overcome.
Water —
Beneficent giant —
Is able to be otherwise.
Nothing is, that is not grace.

A sweet calm can turn deadly;
Beauty at dawn: an omen.
In storms,
Odd it is safer in the perilous water
Than at shore.

Nothing is, that is not given.
Nothing is, that is not grace.

Glynis Mary McManamon

Yes I am scared;
But I'm not afraid to admit it.
Scared that you won't be there,
Scared that I'll be alone,
And still afraid to go on.
Yes I am scared;
Of what life has to offer;
Of where I'll go from here,
Aware of where I'll end up;
This is where I must begin.
Yes I am scared.
Aren't you?

Cindy Mucha

Slanted

To the old one seated
In a short-order booth
Slanting sunlight
Brought dreams of youth,
Where afternoon jostling
Of a four-footed line
Began the ritual
Of milking time,
While warm, gentle breaths
Over roughened tongue
Exhaled benediction:
Thy will be done,
When — a two-legged shadow
With a rasping vow
Offered two percent
Taste of cow.

Sigrid Smith

At the Wrong Time

I was at the wrong place at the wrong time,
and so, her I lie.
No pity on me, just a truckload of dirt.
They said I could get out of all sorts of jams,
but these preserves of darkness are too sticky.
Friends say I'm in a better place — I have not
found that so.
And Mom and Dad cry so loud — I truly wish they wouldn't.
Dear brothers of mine, they really cared — you'd think
they would have shown it more.
No grieving lover for this lonely heart — I gave
many a gorgeous girl the chance.
Relatives by the number — where you come from, eh?
Never seen your wond'ring faces before this
mournful day . . .

I hope you do this for respect and not to make
yourselves look good.

Michael Sheehan

Rev. Joseph Kundek on His Deathbed

In 1857, he suffered acute
abdominal pains from his liver.
Pus oozed from the bone
of his infected right leg.

A physician lanced it. For
relief, he tried swallowing
camphor balls. Vomiting set in.
A trip to French Lick springs

Left him weaker than before.
Rev. Isadore Hobi prepared to
administer the Last Sacraments.
Kundek ordered him to assemble

the congregation. The Germans
formed a procession and, hands
folded, lips murmuring prayers,
accompanied Hobi with the Blessed

Sacrament from the church to
the log cabin. As they filed
past the open door, pastor and
parishioners exchanged one

Last look. The Germans formed
a semicircle rows deep before
the cabin. Isadore entered,
faced Kundek, raised the Host,

and said, "Receive, brother,
the Viaticum of the Body of
our Lord Jesus Christ." "Stop!"
Kundek called out, and raised

himself, extended his arms, and
addressed the Blessed Sacrament.
He gave thanks for his priestly
blessings, apologized for not having

lived up to them, recommended his
entire congregation, and himself,
to God's Grace. "Now go on," he
said to Hobi. *Auf Wiederseh'n*,

he waved from his cot. Raw-
boned Germans sobbed in the sun.
His eyes dulled. When they
prepared him for the coffin,

they found open sores all
over his back. His right leg
could not be straightened,
bent upward in the coffin.

A huge crowd thronged his
Requiem. They proceeded to
the cross in St. Joseph's Cemetery,
and laid him in the earth he cleared.

Norbert Krapf